

*Proposed Committee on Unemployment*

responsibility of private members of parliament to see that we have an accurate picture with regard to unemployment today, and that they have an opportunity to make recommendations as to what should be done to meet it.

There is only one way in which parliament can get at the problem, and that is by setting up a special committee—and setting it up at once. We believe there should be such a committee, and that its first job should be to examine the unemployment situation and find out just exactly what the figures are. Either side may be wrong: perhaps the labour leaders are too high; the cabinet is probably much too low. But let members of the House of Commons find out for themselves what the actual unemployment situation in Canada today is. And, having done this, let them recommend to the house and the government the steps which could be taken to meet the situation, both the short-term and the long-term problem. Let such a committee bring in worth-while recommendations which, I believe, would be of great help to the nation.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker):

That all the words after "that" to the end of the question be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"whereas the facts respecting unemployment recently presented to the government by Canada's two largest labour organizations are widely at variance with the statements issued by the government,

Now, therefore, be it resolved that this house is of the opinion that a select committee should be appointed immediately for the purpose of examining into and reporting upon the actual unemployment situation throughout Canada and for the purpose of making recommendations to this house as to short-term and long-term methods for dealing effectively with this problem".

**Hon. Milton F. Gregg (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened attentively to the remarks of the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra in moving his amendment. I do not propose to refer specifically to the amendment at this time because in the course of my own remarks there may be some that will have reference to it indirectly and I hope will answer some of the questions that are in the minds of hon. members.

My reason for entering the debate at this juncture is that I felt, before it had gone too far, it would be helpful to give to hon. members information we now have available from the last labour force survey and national employment service survey for January as to the numbers about which my hon. friend spoke. The information which I will give will be contained in the regular monthly press statement which will be released very

shortly. My reason for jumping the gun on it and giving totals here is that I felt that if this debate came up today it would be much better to have up to date totals for discussion rather than discuss figures a month old. The press statement of course will contain fuller details. Incidentally, I should like to express my thanks to some of the hard-working officials of the dominion bureau of statistics, the unemployment insurance commission, and the Department of Labour, for sacrificing some of their week end to make this possible.

I will touch first upon the survey of the dominion bureau of statistics. The total number of people estimated to be in our Canadian civilian working force during the week ended January 23, 1954, was 5,242,000 persons. This represents an increase of some 32,000 persons over the estimate of approximately the same date one year ago. Out of that total labour force of 5,242,000 persons there were 4,465,000 persons working full time during the survey week ended January 23, 1954. For purposes of this discussion and this reckoning, full-time employment is defined as 35 hours or more of work per week. It is estimated that at January 23, 357,000 people worked fewer than 35 hours; another 139,000 had jobs but did no work during the survey week, owing to temporary lay-offs, illness, labour disputes, bad weather and a number of other miscellaneous reasons; while there were 280,000 persons who were, to quote the phrase of the dominion bureau of statistics, "without jobs and seeking work".

**Mr. Green:** Are those figures on the same basis as the figure of 190,000 which the minister gave in his statement in January?

**Mr. Gregg:** For the previous month, at the 12th of December, 1953, yes. A year earlier, in the month of January, 1953, the estimated number working 35 hours or more was 4,533,000; the number who worked fewer than 35 hours was 321,000 in January, 1953, and those with jobs but not at work numbered 169,000. At the same time there were 187,000 persons "without jobs and seeking work".

I will now turn to the information available from the national employment service operations of the unemployment insurance commission. The number of applications for jobs listed with the national employment service offices across Canada—there are about 220 of them—on January 21, 1954, was 524,000. This figure represents an increase of 140,000 over the total on the corresponding date of 1953; that is January, 1953. As I indicated to the house last month, these two sets of figures—which the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra referred to—are the product of two quite different types of operations.